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INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000260

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [SOCI](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: IRAQI PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS -- POLLS OPEN, VOTING
UNDERWAY

Classified By: Acting DCM Robert Ford for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Voting in Iraq's provincial elections is underway. The vast majority of 39,000 polling stations around the country are reported to have opened as scheduled at 0700 and UNAMI confirmed at 1200 that all polling centers are now open. U.S. election observer teams report heavy security at all sites, with Iraqi security forces generally operating in a professional manner. UNAMI reports that glitches, where they have occurred, have been within normal margins and have been addressed in a timely manner. As of 1500 local, turnout, thus far, has been uneven, high in some areas (Baghdad, Sinjar, Bayji, Falluja) and lighter in others (Salah ad-Din, Diyala, Ramadi, Basra). There have been a small number of security incidents reported thus far - in Salah ad-Din, Diyala and Ninewa -- but none resulting in any casualties. End Summary.

Turnout

¶2. (C) Turnout in Baghdad has been heavy at all locations. PRT Ninewa reports heavy turnout in Sinjar and disputed areas, while turnout in Mosul was initially light -- although this is expected to increase later in the day. ePRT Falluja reports a solid turnout at two sites visited in the morning. U.S. observer teams report heavy turnout in Karbala, Maysan and Dhi Qar, while turnout in Basra and Najaf are lighter than expected. PRT Salah ad-Din also reported lighter than expected turnout thus far, with polling staff commenting that "some people are afraid to vote for security reasons." PRT Diyala reports light turnout as well in the morning, but also expects it to increase in the afternoon.

Security

¶3. (C) For the most part, morning voting has proceeded without reports of violence. ISF are reported to be performing in a professional manner, although there were reports from Salah ad-Din that some Iraqi police were using "excessive gestures" with weapons to warn away voters approaching polling centers in vehicles. The following incidents have been reported:

- In Tikrit, four mortar rounds were fired in the vicinity of a polling center. There were no casualties or damage reported, and no adverse impact on voting at the site.

- Salah ad-Din PRT reports an unknown explosion near a polling site, but no casualties or damage. ISF are investigating.

- In Ninewa there was a report of small arms fire near a polling center that apparently resulted in one death. Also, in Ninewa, one pipe bomb was discovered in a trash can 500 yards from a polling center. It was disposed of and there were no injuries.

Logistics/Mechanics

¶4. (C) Overall, reports are that voting procedures are working well, with polling centers well-organized and well-staffed, and voting proceeding in an orderly fashion. UNAMI reports that glitches, where they have occurred, have been within normal margins and have been addressed in a timely manner. Four polling centers in Taji did not open on time, but were confirmed to have done so later in the morning. There were no female searchers at a polling station in the Rashid neighborhood of Baghdad when polls opened. This was rectified later in the morning and female voters were then allowed to begin voting. There is one report that the ISF was turning back voters heading into the city center. This is being investigated. There have been isolated reports of voters names not being on the register, with those individuals told to go to their correct polling center.

Atmospherics

¶5. (C) Many observer teams are reporting a very positive, Q5. (C) Many observer teams are reporting a very positive, enthusiastic, and even festive mood at many polling stations. U.S. observer teams confirm the presence of Iraqi elections observers at many sites. In Baghdad, observers reported men, women and even whole families lined up together.

Maliki Talks to the Press

¶6. (U) PM Maliki addressed the press when he cast his ballot

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at the Illaf polling station, stating "This day is a day of joy and pleasure for all Iraqis because they, through their participation in the elections, assert their responsibility and practice their right within the framework of the states administration and in accordance with the Constitution." Maliki said that Iraq's Arab neighbors, others in the region and the international community will rejoice at Iraq's demonstration of democracy, and called on Iraqi security forces to remain vigilant in order to provide the necessary protection to polling centers and voters.

¶7. (U) At 1200 noon local, IHEC held its first of two scheduled press conferences for the day. Providing a factual summary of the day's proceedings, IHEC commissioner noted that there are 15 million registered voters, 100,000 domestic observers and 400 international observers, 400 accredited international media and 1200 accredited domestic media. IHEC will hold a second press conference at 1900, two hours after polls close.

CROCKER